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FROM A DESIGN BY HOLBEIN.

## I. — BOSTON ART CLUB.

### TWENTY-FIRST EXHIBITION.

(OPENED JANUARY 9. CLOSED JANUARY 31.)



THE Exhibition of the Boston Art Club, if compared with the exhibition which was held at the Museum of Fine Arts last year, cannot be called a success. Boston had never before seen such a representative collection of American works of art. But the late Exhibition was representative in no sense. It was neither a local exhibition, showing the progress of painting and sculpture in the city of Boston, or, more broadly, in New England, nor was it anything like a national exhibition, from which a foreign visitor might have gathered some idea of the present state of our art. Of native artists — native, that is, in the Eastern States — we missed entirely from the catalogue the names of F. D. Millet, J. Foxcroft Cole, Robinson, B. F. Porter, F. Hill Smith, J. Appleton Brown, Waterman, Charles S. Pierce, and Dewing, while those whose names did appear were represented, with but few exceptions, by unimportant examples of their work. Of American artists from other cities, hardly half a dozen had thought it worth while to exhibit, F. S. Church, Wyatt Eaton, Charles H. Miller, William Sartain, and F. Hopkinson Smith about exhausting the list.

It is to be regretted that in a country like the United States, where the several centres of society and commerce have a work to do in the stimulation of culture, through mutual rivalry as well as assistance, like that effected by the capitals of Germany, there should not be some means of showing at stated times and in a distinct shape what the artists of each city are doing. Such exhibitions might bring about that localization of style which produces "schools," — a localization which is of the utmost importance in the history of art. General exhibitions, on the other hand, would act as an antidote against exclusiveness and self-complacency. But outside of New York such exhibitions seem to be well-nigh impossible; New York attracting nearly all the young talent of the country, while it succeeds at the same time in holding most of the older men. Its exhibitions, therefore, really give some idea of what is going on in art in America, the works of the disciples of the different schools often hanging peaceably together on the same wall. In Boston the influence of Paris still reigns almost supreme.

Coming back to the Art Club, what do we find in the way of themes? Not much that is inspiring, it must be confessed. The general aspect of the Exhibition, like that of its predecessors, was slight and fragmentary, yet it may honestly be said that there has been a perceptible raising of average merit since some of the displays of two or three years back. The water-colors and crayons were first on the list, and need not detain us long, because as usual they presented the weakest array, taken as a whole. Much the strongest black and white sketch was that of J. Rogers Rich, on the water-side in Boston, — a large elevator or warehouse, ships, the water represented by broad thumb-streaks, and a black cloud-rack overhead, — forcible, true, and picturesque, recalling Hunt, and much in the vein of the New York men who are learning to see artistic motives in tumble-down tenements and rickety old wharves. H. W. Pierce showed a small November twilight, — tentative, but genuine and independent, — which was very effective by reason of its rendering of faded green grass, denuded trees, and the orange sunset with a glimmering green above it. From New York had come a frame of etchings by F. S. Church, which were marked both by grim fancy and excellent realism, one subject being a rude cabin made from an old horse-car, with geese in the foreground and the elevated railroad making its first appearance in art in the background, where it looked like a wire frame with a small dragon-fly shooting along its top. From New York also were the two wood-scenes by F. Hopkinson Smith, which might be praised for their remarkable manual dexterity and command of resources. Yet there was not much depth or sentiment discoverable in them, and they did not quite bear out the reputation which, as we are told, the artist enjoys in his own city. Mr. Cranch's well-known Venetian scenes, and a water-color by Langerfeldt may be mentioned as bearing well-known names, and we might go on minutely to record

the gleams of good in numerous other pieces ; but there is no space for this, the only point which it will be to our purpose to note here being the weakness of subject-matter, with an accompanying weakness of style, displayed by most of the native artists represented. A dim feeling for the picturesque is occasionally discerned, and sometimes a faint sense of color, but an immense amount of discipline and of spiritual enlargement is needed to develop anything more. A few traces of Fortuny, in water-colors by Hamman and Campi, enforce upon one the great gulf between this latest hot-house flower of European art and the frail seedlings of our own climate. Yet, although something is to be learned from these, it is not worth while to imitate them as closely as do some of the Fortuny worshippers in New York.

With the oils the case is better. Neither landscape nor marine, it is true, which one expects to find especially strong, offers itself in great force ; nor, on the other hand, does the human figure receive very assiduous attention. The collective strength of the Exhibition may be said to vacillate between the two, without gaining noticeable triumphs in either. *A Lady of the Fourteenth Century*, by Frances M. Houston, is a somewhat pronounced effort in the way of a decorative costume picture, having a bodice and long tunic of pomegranate-red, with lake sleeves slashed in white, against a pistachio-green background, — a combination too obviously decorative to be thoroughly pleasing. The face is so particularly modern as to be dissonant ; the neck and right hand are deficient in drawing ; but there is some skill manifest in the brush-work, and the body is well indicated underneath the dress. Mr. Wyatt Eaton's study of a *Peasant Mother and Child* is careful and true, but utterly charmless. The painter shows us exactly what we don't want to see, instead of elevating a plain animal episode into the region of the pleasing. Passing over two carefully finished women in white satin and blue silk, posed in a white and gold room, done by Mr. Moses Wight in the manner of Willems, and which are gently suggestive of millinery bills, we can look with some satisfaction at Edgar M. Ward's *Street Scene at Tréport*. It depicts a girl in a scarlet kirtle, pausing under a huge stone archway, to speak with an old fisherman who displays a herring. The realism here is good, and the painting praiseworthy. There is character in the two faces, but both persons stand before us motionless, exactly as the models halted in the studio. A less accomplished but in some ways more pleasing performance is that of W. L. Metcalf, entitled *Back from the Fields*, — a young woman in a pink print, carrying a pail, with a gate and a glimpse of grass-field behind her. It is after the style of Winslow Homer ; but this style has so much raciness and native simplicity (suggesting the quality of a wild strawberry among fruits), that we can more than pardon the brevity of its application and its imperfections in execution. Mr. Vinton's *Enfant de Chœur*, while not strikingly new, possesses a decided grace in its representation of a rapt, thoughtful expression. Mr. Gaugengigl's *Long, long Ago*, with its small dimensions and its carefully painted old gentleman in antiquated costume, reminds one of Brillouin rather than of the Munich school as we know it through the works of Duveneck and others. Mr. Weeks, it is but fair to say, shows a vast improvement in his *Street Scene in Rabat, Morocco*, which is a good bit of African picturesque, and in his Egyptian *Cane Harvest*, in which, nevertheless, his camels call up reminiscences of the Noah's ark of childhood. But we have not studied the camel, and so we must accept this version on trust. In H. F. Osborne's *Little Puritan*, a spark of unmistakable originality is encountered. It is a mere study, hung high up, — a girl's head, hooded, — but it shows a keen, unbiased perception. The artist has seized upon a characteristic American physiognomy, and given it a share of ideal value. In this place, and as a stimulating evidence of healthful contact with the nature about us, it is to be valued much more highly than Cabanel's *Almée*, which although interesting as the work of an eminent French master, is lewd and otherwise displeasing. The *Little Puritan* is pure, simple, well done as far as it goes, and so vivacious as to excite a smile of pleasure.

It is pertinent here to ask ourselves (as we must so often do) why it is that American painters who begin, like this student, with a true appreciation of the characteristic and a naïve straightforwardness, almost invariably lose their originality as they progress in *technique*. If we only had the courage or the opportunity to let our art grow up in its own way from the beginning, as other national expressions of the artistic instinct have done ! Although we must, of course, assent to what Mr. Benjamin said in a previous number of the REVIEW, respecting the vital need of importing style, I cannot but think that this constant grafting on of foreign styles spoils many a native fruit. But the difficulty is not wholly in the fact, which is inevitable : it lies rather in the method. Home art-schools, it is to be hoped, will in the course of time modify the dangers of arbitrary method by the infusion of a greater independence (albeit duly disciplined) into the mood of students. But still more is to be gained by the cultivation of stronger sympathies among artists who have passed the period of pupilage, a more earnest associated effort on their part to find out what they are striving after and what they ought to make their goal.

Among the heads exhibited, Mr. Vinton's portraits of Hon. Charles Francis Adams and Mr. William Amory stand undisputably and as to their competitors easily first. The whole treatment is very conservative ; but this gives additional point to their decided merits, both of characterization and manipulation. Perhaps there is too much space left over Mr. Amory's head, but otherwise the management is highly judicious. The two effigies are alive with fidelity and force, despite the sobriety of their tone. More modern in their realism and less penetrating in spirit than Gilbert Stuart's best works, these portraits yet — without exaggeration — recall in some measure his

unhesitating grasp and life-like coloring, although the perception of color is less full and joyous than Stuart's. Mr. John Selinger's *Girl's Head*, painted in the manner of Leibl, with whom this young artist studied in Munich, cannot be characterized as a very good example of his powers, and did not realize the expectations raised by the *Study of a Peasant*, lately shown at Doll and Richards's. Mr. Ordway's *Dreaming* surprises by its unpretending sweetness and its tenderly drawn profile, placed against a surface of clay-blue tint, somewhat according to the traditions of pastel. A number of other heads, with the exception, perhaps, of a vigorous but somewhat rude portrait of the Norwegian painter Rein, by Rosa F. Peckham, may be passed over.

A curious example of the changes which affect a man painting in France and in New Hampshire is afforded by Mr. F. B. De Blois's two landscapes. One is a winter scene near Calais, admirably executed in every respect, — the far extending flatness of the ground, the rutted road with its crawling wagons, the big hay-ricks, the glimpse of town and sunset in the distance, the reflected light in a pool, like golden threads in tapestry, and the remarkable pale key in which all this is pitched. The other canvas sets forth a New Hampshire pasture, with a small drove of cattle in front, woods in the middle distance, and a faint line of mountains farther off. It seems to have been painted within a year of the other, yet how different from it in quality! It is difficult to account for this difference, except by the lowering of the artistic temperature, the absence of professional union and discerning patronage, which our painters encounter as soon as they come home. The blame is sometimes thrown on our climate and atmosphere; but this is puerile. One need only be reminded of the best efforts of men like Inness, La Farge, Hunt, Gifford, etc., who have drawn from our fields and hillsides and waters so much that is peculiar to our nature, yet ideally charming, to be convinced that the excuse is not valid. The best American landscape shown, in the present writer's opinion, was Mr. George W. Maynard's *Marblehead*, exceptionally good in its composition, with quaint old houses and green terrace leading up to the tall red tower (St. Michael's?) above, and a white-sailed boat on the water below, with two white birds skimming the water. The style is allied to the Dutch or English; but the whole is fresh, sincere, easy in execution and strong in color. Even Mr. Miller's *Fisherman's Home*, with its masterly sky, and mellow, Constable-like tone, is not so welcome, because less American. Mr. Enneking's *December Twilight*, with its frost-stilled trees, sunset, and spark of light in a distant window, was more agreeable than his labored *Cloudy Day, October*, despite a fine study of bare boughs in the latter. This painter belongs to the small group of original men. Mr. Albert Thompson's *Waverley* must also be mentioned, although it shows very decidedly the influence of foreign methods. Mr. E. G. Champney, in his *Under the Pines*, caught a glimpse of the weird in the ordinary, which he rendered very commendably. His subject was the spreading, talon-like roots of a pine on a hillside, with two women walking away over the grass beyond. *Landscape and Cattle*, by Mr. C. F. Pierce, a great, lazy stretch of grass and willows, with mild, stupid cattle at their watering-place, was not bad, but appealed to an obsolescent taste. Mr. J. M. Stone's *In the Pasture* was marred by a curious contradiction between the want of luminosity and the deep, dark shadows thrown by the cattle. The Hunt school was represented, not wholly to its credit, some will think, by Miss Knowlton's *Willow Road*, with false black shadows, which certainly never could have been seen so in nature. The rest of the landscape quota may be passed by. It was made up of the usual variety of respectable, mediocre, and bad pictures, which are produced from year to year, — it would be difficult to say why. As extreme examples, Bertha von Hillern's *Wood Interior* and Mrs. Tryon's similar subject at Grand Menan might be mentioned.

The marine was but sparingly represented. There was a picture by Mr. Lansil, *Market Boats, Boston Harbor*, which, in spite of some good qualities, did not show this artist's generally agreeable coloring at its best; a great canvas by Eldred, *Wrecked and Abandoned*, in which the disquieting effects of a storm-tossed sea were principally apparent in the color; and a couple of studies by Wasson.

Among the still-life and fruit and flower studies Mr. John Selinger's *White Turkey*, capitally painted, and showing how even the most ordinary every-day subject may furnish a worthy theme for the artist, was altogether the best. Equally commendable, in respect of careful painting, was Mr. R. S. Dunning's study of a kettle, potatoes, and other vegetables, the whole reminding one of the kitchen-pieces of Willem Kalf, although the unfortunate background detracts considerably from the merits of the picture.

To get an idea of what our men and women are really doing, one is compelled to hunt all over town, through the studios, the auction-rooms, and the picture-galleries. Mr. Ernest Longfellow, for instance, who sent to the Art Club only two small and unimportant canvases, held an exhibition of his own simultaneous with the show at the Club, in which were gathered the pictures which really made evident what he has accomplished during his stay abroad. In this collection, numbering twenty-seven pieces, one found evidences of steady industry, and a study of the figure which has increased the artist's knowledge amazingly. The *Afternoon on the Nile*, with its visionary water and delicately shadowed cliffs of pale rose; the cool gray and green *In the Fields, Villiers le Bel*; the *Stirling Castle*, and several others among the landscapes, — all indicated growth, greater flexibility, and more technical skill than the artist possessed two years ago. The largest work in the collection, and perhaps the most ambitious that any Boston painter has recently exhibited, is the *Choice of Youth*, a figure composition many feet square. Considering how rare it is that our artists rise to the ideal, and show the laudable hunger for fame which

is necessary to sustain a man in work avowedly unremunerative, a picture such as this deserves to be welcomed ; and it is all the more painful, therefore, when one is compelled to acknowledge that it is impossible to sympathize with the artist in his achievement. A picture, above all things else, must attract the beholder by its beauty of line and wealth of color. Outward beauty is the first consideration, and Titian's *Earthly and Heavenly Love*, though no one knows its meaning, will ever remain a great work of art. It is here that Mr. Longfellow fails. His picture is too bare an allegory, in which, despite occasional glimpses of beauty and a good deal of careful painting, the moralist has overpowered the artist.

The foreign pictures in the Art Club Exhibition, among them a very glowing Ziem, must be left unnoticed, for want of space.

G. P. LATHROP.

## II.—BLACK AND WHITE.

SECOND ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF THE SALMAGUNDI SKETCH CLUB, NEW YORK.

(OPENED JANUARY 19. CLOSED JANUARY 31.)



A NATIVE OF MONHEGAN.

By M. J. BURNS. — FROM THE ARTIST'S OWN SKETCH.

THE public has testified its interest in the rather new form of entertainment here provided for it more generously this year than ever before. The simplicity and directness of the means employed commend themselves to general appreciation, and perhaps also, as the aim is so much simpler than in color, it is more often realized. Colorists of genuine excellence are in fact somewhat rare, and, if we may be invited to a feast of all the other picturesque qualities,—design, story, decorative effect, agreeable distribution of masses, and play of light and shade,—while striving for the last and most subtle form of perfection alone is omitted, it is not always an occasion for regret, but in many cases quite the contrary. There cannot, unfortunately, be founded upon this, however, an argument for the superiority of the incapables in color; since, while they certainly do show to their best advantage here, it is the colorists who get the most delicate grays, the most agreeable relations, the most extensive range of possibilities in short, out of the simpler material as well as the more complicated. It is such men as R. Swain Gifford, Blum, Murphy, Muhrman, J. D. Smillie, G. F. Shelton, Church, Reinhart, Kappes, who show to such excellent advantage at the Exhibition in parallel progress at the Academy of Design, that really shine.

One is pleasantly surprised to find